MEMORIAL EXERCISES IN HONOR OF THE LATE SENATOR WILLIAM B. ALLISON

ADDRESS

OF

HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW

OF NEW YORK

IN THE

UNITED STATES SENATE

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ADDRESS

OF

HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW.

We raise the curtain to-day upon the most momentous events in the history of the Republic. The life of our nation can be broadly divided into three eras—its creation, its preservation, and its development. The two last are vividly recalled by the career of Senator WILLIAM B. ALLISON. He entered Congress in 1862 and died a Senator in 1908. Never during recorded time has so much been done for liberty, humanity, and progress as is crowded into this period. The whole world is its debtor, but the United States is our retrospect at this hour.

We are here in the assembly honored by his membership and the hall which witnessed his activities to pay tribute to the memory of one of the most influential statesmen of these wonderful years. He took his seat in the House of Representatives when the future seemed darkest. A solid South and divided North, disaster to the Union cause in the field and threatened intervention by Europe, our credit seriously impaired, and widespread discontent created a situation full of peril for the preservation of the Union. The continent trembled under the tread of armies greater in number than any before marshaled in modern times, and the shock of battles between brothers, each willing to die for his idea, had desolated every home in the land. Lincoln voiced the first and greatest necessity to save the Union in these memorable words:

"I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery,

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I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

He stood like a rock against abolitionists and radicals who would have him try to free the slaves at a time when public sentiment would not have sustained him and the loss of Union supporters would have been fatal, but when all saw it was necessary to save the Union he issued the emancipation proclamation.

The success of the national cause in the civil war placed the Union upon firmer foundation, to be made secure for all time by the reconstruction of the States and the acceptance by those in rebellion of their equal enjoyment of American citizenship and unity in loyalty for the old flag. Our Government was then the least in power and consideration among nations. But it advanced by leaps and bounds until at the peace of Portsmouth between Russia and Japan, brought about by President Roosevelt, we took front rank and won the right and recognition of voice and vote in all matters affecting the welfare of the world.

People prosper and nations advance according to the wisdom of the policies and measures which govern them. The waste of war must be supplied by credit and money. The country required revenue bills to enlarge its income; the development of its resources to furnish the basis for increased taxation, and a currency system in harmony with great industrial nations. It was in these fields that Senator ALLISON did most wise, beneficent, and far-reaching work. Happily his State of Iowa, appreciating his value to the country, kept him continuously in the Senate. The record and rewards of his career were due to neither luck nor chance. He won and held place and increasing power by ceaseless industry, rare judgment, tact which amounted to genius, and the graces which command loyalty and love. In the House he was on the Committee on Ways and

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Means, and in the Senate for twenty-six years a member of the Committee on Finance, and for twenty-five years on the Committee on Appropriations, and for twenty years its chairman. In these positions he had always before him problems of revenue and expenditures of the Government upon which rest its stability, credit, and prosperity. They appealed to him because of natural gifts for these questions, and by study and experience he acquired such mastery over them that he became an acknowledged authority and accepted leader.

He believed that industrial independence and internal development, increase in national wealth, and a higher standard of living for labor than ever known, could be had only by a protective tariff. He was the clearest and soundest of the many able men who have contributed to the legislation or literature of this question. The Morrill bill, enacted in 1861, had performed invaluable service in replenishing the Treasury during the war and stimulating production and manufactures after. But the marvelous growth of our industries in both volume and variety called for a new adaptation to present needs. While McKinley was the unrivaled expounder and advocate of the merits of the measure which bore his name, it was the ripe learning and constructive genius of ALLISON which framed and perfected the law. He pointed out the weakness which was afterwards developed in the Wilson bill, and his report warned Congress and the country of the disastrous results which followed its enactment. The universal recognition of his talents for initiative and upbuilding made him a member of the subcommittee which perfected the Dingley bill, which has been in force since 1897, and to him was assigned the charge of its passage in the Senate. In this brief review is seen the master mind and skilled hand in legislation for the tariff during the thirty-five years it was on trial. He saw his policy at times crippled, and once nearly destroyed; but with faith which never wavered and courage which never faltered he plead with the people and labored with their representatives until the fruition of his opinions and experience had ripened into law. He lived to witness for ten years the most extraordinary progress and

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prosperity ever known in any land—the result, as he believed, of the triumph of his principles.

But the Senator's activities were in every branch of revenue legislation. He prepared in 1868 the internal-revenue law which, with few modifications, is still in force, and with the least possible burden upon the people yields large returns to the Treasury.

Alexander Hamilton was the greatest of constructive statesmen. With little of precedent for guidance he formed out of chaos a model system of constitutional government and devised the details for its administration. He was the father of protective principles, and his report on that subject has been the inspiration of all subsequent discussion and legislation. His methods and rules for the management of our customs remained unchanged for a century. Primitive conditions in the importation of foreign goods had grown and expanded until our commerce had so far outgrown the regulations which had controlled it for a hundred years that modifications adapted to modern situations were necessary. The work had been undertaken many times and failed, and was finally placed in the hands of Senator ALLISON. After two years of patient effort he succeeded in enacting a law wholly prepared by himself which, without change, has been the guide of our customs-revenue service from 1890 until today.

Senator ALLISON was a disciple of Hamilton. He revered his memory and was a profound student of his works. At a time when the people were wildly following the ignis fatuus of visionary finance, ALLISON kept his faith in sound economic principles. He early saw that material development and progress were temporary and delusive unless based upon a stable and unfluctuating standard of value. We came out of the civil war with our currency upon foundations as insecure as the earthquake soil of Messina, and feverish speculation followed by disastrous panics was our perpetual peril. A loyal sentiment that the irredeemable greenback had saved the Union nurtured faith in fiat money and the virtues of the paper mill in maintaining values. This and the silver heresy threatened political oblivion

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to all who opposed them. The Senator's fight for sound money illustrated the practical ability of his statesmanship. He could bow to the storm and not be bent. He saw no merit in so attempting to stem the tide as to be swept into outer darkness and lost to sight and memory. He preferred to go with and guide it—the most difficult of tasks. It required from 1865 to 1875 before the people could be educated to belief in a specie basis. That decade was as full of peril to our industries as the civil war had been to our nationality. The resumption act was the work of John Sherman, but his ablest and most efficient associate was Senator ALLISON.

That law made our depreciated currency as good as gold in theory, but not in fact. The enormous output of silver alarmed the mining industry because the supply was exceeding the demand. Besides the selfish interests of the mine owners, some of the best minds in the country became advocates of the free and unlimited coinage of silver. The farmer was persuaded it would double the price of his products and pay off his mortgages; the debtor that it would reduce the amount of his loans; the workman that it would double his wages, and by the mysterious alchemy of a government stamp, its purchasing power would not diminish with its falling price. Both Houses of Congress were captured by its fallacies and popularity. Popular passions had not run so high since the civil war. Wise and prudent men saw that the success of the scheme would drive out gold, put the country on a silver basis, and after a wild carnival end in bankruptcy. Senator ALLISON saved the situation by securing the assent of a majority for a limited coinage of silver, bought by and belonging to the Government. The working of this compromise demonstrated the folly of a double standard and brought the people to see that except the opinion of the world could be changed we must come to gold. In hastening that event our friend performed invaluable and lasting service. The successful legislator must adjust the bill he proposes or has in charge to the diverse views of his colleagues without impairing its essential object. He yields, harmonizes, and conciliates, but gets in the main what he wants at the time or gains a step for further advance when the majority are brought to his view.

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Senator ALLISON was past master of that art. He knew the Senate. Its capricious moods were his opportunity. His patience was never exhausted, the serenity of his temper never ruffled. He could grant to an adversary an amendment with such grace and deference to superior judgment that the flattered enemy accepted a few suggestions from the master as a tribute to his talents. The post-mortem revealed his mistake.

As in the gold standard, so whenever a principle was involved, the Senator's mind was clear from the beginning; but it required, step by step, twenty years before the idea captured the country. The strongest criticism of his career was his willingness to compromise; but the Constitution of the United States was a compromise between the large and smaller States. The Missouri Compromise of Henry Clay in 1820 was the salvation of the Union—secession then would have succeeded; but forty years devoted to instilling into youth love for the Nation and the flag, and the growth in population and resources of the free States welded the Union beyond the possibility of disruption.

The country reunited in faith and loyalty, the industrial and financial systems which had commanded his unequaled talents for a third of a century triumphantly established and working out the beneficent results of prosperity, production, and happiness upon which he had based faith and prophecy, the old statesman might have been content.

Nations, like individuals, "pass this way but once." Golden opportunities at the milestones are lost or won. The triumphs of one generation make trouble for the next. Progress and development create new issues and statesmen confront fresh problems with every advance. Railroad mileage had increased with the growth of population and extension of settlements. These lines are the arteries of commerce and had been consolidated into great systems. Evils existed in some of them which angered the people against them all. Government ownership or government control were leading issues. The President and his advisers prepared a large scheme of government control. It was threatened, on the one hand, by conservative forces which fight all change in existing conditions, and radical reformers

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who would put on the measure drastic amendments so far-reaching and confiscatory as to involve years of litigation and invite an adverse decision from the Supreme Court. The veteran victor of a hundred legislative battlefields was called into council. The suggestions of Senator ALLISON perfected and passed the rate bill. It has stood the test of the courts. It has largely eliminated the evils of railway management, and the people and investors recognize its wisdom.

Senator ALLISON was never spectacular. He was modest and retiring to a degree. Many of his colleagues filled large space with their speeches in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, while his monument was in the statute books. Because of the radicalism of their proposals, or their eloquence in debate, or their manufacture of epigrams, others had headlines and columns in the press, while this tireless and unheralded architect of the public welfare was standing guard over the Treasury or making laws which marked epochs in our history.

He rarely missed a vote. When the bell rang for a roll call, coming from his constant labor in the room of the Committee on Appropriations, he was among the first to enter the Senate. His name was at the top of the list. He never waited to find out how the question was going, but answered promptly, and that answer often decided the fate of the measure. He had the courage of his convictions and not of a majority behind him.

He represented an agricultural State whose people often differed with him on economic and financial questions. But a singularly broad-minded and intelligent constituency recognized his honesty, character, and greatness, and loyally returned him again and again to the seat in which he shed such luster upon Iowa. His closing hours were passed in the supreme happiness that after thirty-five years of continuous service in the Senate and after passing the limit of fourscore the people had commissioned him for another term.

If, as I believe, those who meet in the activities of this life are reunited hereafter, it was a wonderful band of immortals who greeted ALLISON. President Lincoln had consulted him on measures for raising money to carry on the war; Johnson on

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constitutional amendments, civil rights, and general amnesty; Grant on the reconstruction of the States, finance, and a government for the District of Columbia, still working satisfactorily and wholly devised by ALLISON; Hayes on the resumption of specie payments; Arthur on the policy of a tariff commission; Harrison on the McKinley tariff legislation and closer relations between the republics of the Western Hemisphere by a Pan-American Congress; Cleveland on the repeal of the purchase clause of the Sherman silver law; and McKinley on tariff, currency, the gold standard, and grave questions arising out of the acquisition and government of Porto Rico and the Philippines—all of them era-making measures. Three of these Presidents had urgently invited him to join their cabinets, and twice the Presidency had been almost within his grasp. When he first obtained the floor in Congress he addressed Speaker Schuyler Colfax, and when he spoke last, forty-five years afterwards, Vice-President Fairbanks in the chair recognized the Senator from Iowa. Seward, Chase, and Stanton, John Sherman, James G. Blaine, and Thaddeus Stevens were his associates and intimates. When the future historian writes the story of this remarkable period and portrays the actors in that great national drama who contributed to its distinction, he will place among the few in the front rank the name of WILLIAM B. ALLISON.

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